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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help people with intellectual disabilities, their friends, family members, and support workers evaluate and choose a literacy program that includes people who have differences. A brief introduction points out that, in Canada, all citizens have the right to an education and cites Article 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a declaration from the International Literacy Seminar (1988). The guide is organized around 21 questions to ask in a literacy interview. Each one is discussed in terms of the issues involved and an appropriate response. Questions address knowledge about the specific disability, program philosophy, definition of literacy, the difficult realities in the lives of most people with disabilities, program inclusiveness, program funding, program costs, available supports and services, how the program addresses individual needs, class activities, cooperation with other programs, the family role, evaluation methods, training of tutors, confidentiality, possible incompatibility between learner and tutor, and board membership. Also provided is a list of resources and organizations including handbooks and guides, policy and research guides, and other resource guides, along with a list of Canadian provincial and territorial literacy coalitions and contacts. (DB)

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Speaking of Equality:

A Guide to Choosing an Inclusive Literacy Program for People with an Intellectual Disability, Their Families, Friends and Support Workers

L'INSTITUT ROEHER INSTITUTE

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The ROEHER Institute

Canada's National Institute for the Study of Public Policy Affecting Persons with and Intellectual Impairment and Other Disabilities

The Roeher Institute is Canada's leading organization to promote the equality, participation and self-determination of people with intellectual and other disabilities, by examining the causes of marginalization and by providing research, information and social development opportunities.

To fulfill this mandate, The Roeher Institute is engaged in many activities: research and public policy analysis; publishing; information dissemination; and training, education and leadership development.

The Roeher Institute acts as a centre for the development and exchange of ideas, all of which are founded on a new way of looking at disability and society. It critically examines issues related to the well-being and human rights of persons with an intellectual impairment and other disabilities. Based on its examination of these issues, The Institute raises awareness about the barriers that affect people's full participation and prevent them from exercising their rights. The Institute also presents policy and program alternatives.

For more information about The Roeher Institute please contact us at:

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Foreword

The world is changing. Many of yesterday's job skills are no longer useful. You need to become smarter, faster and more efficient. You need knowledge and information.

Peering through new windows, you see the information superhighway sprawl across a universe of knowledge chaos. Data flies along this highway. You'd better be on the highway.

But what about if you are among the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have a hard time even getting *on* the bus? What if you find yourself being pushed further and further back from the windows that look onto the information superhighway?

No one should be excluded, we are told. Everyone has human rights. Our *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* says so. Our human rights laws say so. The whole world says so through the United Nations. This includes the right to be treated fairly and not to be discriminated against. It includes the right to an education. But many people with disabilities do not get enough education. What are the chances of escaping discrimination if you don't have the education you need — if you can't read or write?

If basic literacy was important in yesterday, it is crucial for surviving today and in the future. Already, nearly a third of a million Canadian adults of working age who have disabilities feel that their reading skills are not good enough.

People with intellectual disabilities face particular challenges in this new world. As we learned from another study we did, *Literacy and Labels: A Look at Literacy Policy and People with a Mental Handicap*, many people cannot read or write because no one took the time to teach them. No one took the time to teach them because they were considered unable to learn. Because they were considered unable to learn, educators overlooked what was possible. Because educators overlooked the possibilities, developers of literacy programs and resources did so, too.

True, things are a little better. More people labelled as having an intellectual disability are going to regular schools. Not as many are being put away in institutions. Some are finding real jobs that pay enough to live

on. However, things have been difficult. And until more people have better opportunities to learn to read and write, things will probably get harder.

This book was written to help people who have an intellectual disability, their friends, family members and support workers find a literacy program that includes people who have differences. It provides questions that can be asked in your search for a program, to help you find a place where you can learn in a safe, friendly environment.

Many people helped to create these guides. We would like to express our thanks to Lee Weinstein, Liz Wyman, Nancy Friday-Coburn, Susan MacDonald, Alfred Jean Baptiste, Shirley Thrasher, Neil Pauls, John Stanley, Sue Turner, Susan Devins, Doug Rankin, Pat Hatt, Michele Neary, Kelly Agazzi, Patricia Bowman, Angela Tessler, Judy Carter-Smith, Julie Stone, Aileen Wight-Felske, Rita Raegele, Jean Rasmussen, Donna Lunau, Harold Alden, Marilyn Ferrel, Penny Laughren, Jane Field, Krishna Persaud, Linda Brown, Paula Copeland, Gladys Watson and Bill Puszati.

In addition, sincere thanks go to the funder of this project, the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada. Their commitment to the issue of literacy and disability has helped raise awareness everywhere. Without their support, this guide, like many other important books on literacy, would not have been possible.

Finally, thanks go to the many people with intellectual disabilities who, over the years, have insisted they want to read and write, who have declared it unfair to be denied this dream, and who have persisted to prove their dream is achievable. Thanks to their leadership, encouragement and advice, many others are coming to understand what they knew all along.

Cameron Crawford
Assistant Director

Introduction

In Canada, all citizens have the right to an education

Rights are the rules that mean people are equal and have equal opportunities. All people are entitled to the same rights under the law. Though all citizens have the right to an education, the reality is that many people with disabilities cannot read or write or use numbers. This is mainly because they have never had a chance to learn. This lack of access to education — including literacy education — is unfair. There are laws in Canada that protect people from being treated unfairly.

More and more people with disabilities are learning about their rights. They are realizing they have the right to read and write. Many want to join literacy programs across Canada. Having the chance to take part in literacy education gives people a greater voice in their community. People join literacy programs to learn many different things. One person may want to enroll in a literacy program to learn to write his or her own name. That is a very positive goal because it means the person can sign important papers. It may also mean the person can be on a voter's list and have the same right as other people in Canadian society at election time, the right to vote.

Literacy courses are given in libraries, community centres, schools and at work. Different programs have different ways of teaching literacy. Programs that allow the individual student to choose what he or she wants to learn take a "learner-centred approach". Studies show that learner-centred programs are the best at including people with different abilities. Learners say that learner-centred programs also help them personally because they feel more empowered and in control of their lives.

This manual takes a learner-centred approach by putting learners' concerns first. It gives questions a learner might want to ask at an interview with a literacy program to get important information. With this information, a learner is better able to choose the literacy program that best meets his or her needs.

It is hoped that this manual will help people exercise their rights as they look for a second chance at education as adults.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Article 15

(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Declaration and recommendations from the International Literacy Seminar in Toronto (1988)

"Literacy is a basic human right for the advancement of all people around the world...

Justice demands that the problems of illiteracy must be attacked in a world that possesses all the means and resources to do so...

In order to promote social justice and equality, the special needs of oppressed people must be recognized and met in literacy programs. This includes: women, indigenous peoples, minorities, the unemployed, and people who have been labelled and excluded."

Questions You Can Ask in a Literacy Interview

Question 1:
What do you need to know about my disability?

The issue:

Over the years, many labels have been used to describe people who have an intellectual disability. Often these labels are hurtful. They tend to look at things people cannot do, their "deficits". These labels often limit the possibilities for people. For the person, the label itself may have no meaning: their abilities and strengths, their interests and their life experiences are much more important.

It is most important that literacy educators know the kinds of supports a person may need so he or she can gain literacy skills.

What you need to listen for:

Staff working in literacy programs that include people with disabilities will be more interested in what you want to learn, than about labels. They will probably ask you what information you would like to share with them about your disability.

Question 2:
What do you mean by literacy?

The issue:

Many people argue over what "literacy" is. Some say that "basic literacy" is being able to read and write a short, simple sentence about life. Others say literacy is being able to read and write or use numbers.

Literacy is important because it makes it possible for people to communicate using written words. It is also important because it gives people knowledge and power.

People who can read and write are called **literate.**
People who can't read and write are called **illiterate.**
Everyone has the right to become **literate.**
No one wants to be labelled **illiterate.**

Not being able to read and write makes it hard for people to be full members of society. Without literacy skills, it is hard to know as much as people who can read and it is hard to feel equal or as good as people who can read and write.

What you need to listen for:

Programs that are inclusive respect everyone's potential and accept all students on equal terms. Literacy tutors in those programs take a helpful approach and believe every person can build literacy skills.

Question 3:
What is the philosophy of your literacy program?

The issue:

Many people say basic literacy is having the reading and writing skills you need to take part fully in our society. Another definition is that literacy is more than reading and writing and using numbers. It says people also need life skills and knowledge to grow.

The learner-centred approach accepts that learning is a two-way street between a tutor and learner. The learner gains new skills and the tutor finds out about the experiences and challenges learners face in their lives. Learners are supported to say what their wishes are and how they want to learn.

"Critical literacy" means skills gained by people who don't usually have a voice in making decisions about the things that concern them. They may be poor, or women or people from a visible minority or they may have a disability. They are pushed to the side in society and are discriminated against. Learning these skills makes it possible for them to tell their interests and needs to more people.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs encourage learners to direct their own learning so they can:

- ❑ build their self-confidence
- ❑ participate more fully in society
- ❑ work towards empowerment
- ❑ challenge society to change.

Question 4:
How do you decide if someone is literate or illiterate?

The issue:

It is hard to measure the literacy level of a person with an intellectual disability.

For centuries people believed that it was not possible for some people to learn to read or write. Many people have lived their lives in institutions where they were given few opportunities for their talents and skills to grow. Many others were sent to separate schools where they had no chance to learn along with other children in their neighbourhoods.

Sometimes the last grade a person reached in school is used to decide a person's level of literacy. But this is not very useful for people who have not had a chance to go to school. Instead of using a school grade, another way is to find out how a person uses reading and writing for other goals. In 1990, Statistics Canada set four "comfort levels" with reading, writing and numeracy to see the literacy levels of Canadians.

No one knows what level of literacy people with an intellectual disability have.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs see that the term "illiterate" is hurtful. Out of respect for new learners they will find other ways to talk about some people who have not had the opportunity for much education or schooling.

Tutors know that if people are given enough time and the right teaching, most can become literate. A lot depends on whether the learner has the right learning tools.

Question 5:
What do you need to know about the issues facing me in my life?

The issue:

People looking for inclusive literacy programs have been left out of their communities in many ways. There have been some good changes but many people are still left on the sidelines. Many have not had the chance to take part in the things that most people enjoy. And they face discrimination and hurtful attitudes everywhere.

Most policies and programs of organizations and governments leave out some people. Literacy policies and programs do this too and it affects people's lives a great deal. People with disabilities face many issues in their lives.

A. Institutions

In the past many people with intellectual disabilities were placed in institutions — sometimes for the rest of their lives. Most institutions were not set up for teaching people to read and write. Institutions did not prepare people to live in the community. Doctors labelled and measured people's intelligence (IQs) and this caused many problems in people's lives. All this led to fear and prejudice about people with disabilities.

Today more people know that, with good supports, a person is less handicapped by a disability. More people also agree that it was unjust to deny people their rights.

Today most provinces and territories have promised to close their institutions. They are now moving people back to their communities.

Fortunately, today most people with intellectual disabilities live in communities across the country — with their families, in group homes, in apartments or houses with friends or by themselves.

B. Education

In most communities across Canada, students are still set apart in special schools or in special classes in regular schools. Setting people apart puts a label on them and tells the rest of the community that they are different in a negative way. When children are separated, they and other children do not have the chance to learn about one another and from one another.

Very few people with disabilities finish high school so they do not have the literacy and numeracy skills to cope with all the demands of today's society. Without these skills, few are able to get jobs.

66 per cent of people with an intellectual disability between 15 and 64 years of age have less than a Grade 9 education.

C. Employment

Employers tend to see a person's disability, rather than their possible abilities as an employee. This means people often find themselves in separate "sheltered workshops". There they work with other people with disabilities and are paid below the minimum wage. They can't get other jobs because they have not had a chance to become literate. Most jobs ask for at least a Grade 9 education. Most jobs are advertised in print and most job applications are made in writing so people who cannot read or write are not able to apply for these jobs.

Only 28 per cent of people with intellectual disabilities have jobs.

61 per cent of people with intellectual disabilities with jobs work in sheltered settings.

D. Poverty

Most adults who cannot read or write are poor. Without literacy, most people have fewer chances to escape poverty. Most people who don't know how to read and write don't have enough money because they don't have real jobs. Without a real job most people have to depend on welfare, which means they won't ever have enough money for all their needs.

So people with intellectual disabilities are often poor. They don't have good food. They don't have as many opportunities as other people. Even if they learn to read and write and get a job, chances are the job will pay minimum wage or just a bit more. People with disabilities often have to buy extra things or pay for extra services because of their disability, but they do not get extra wages to pay for these things.

89 per cent of adults with an intellectual disability have an income of less than $10,000 a year.

E. Health

Poor people also sometimes have poor health. People who do not make much money and who cannot read or write face "double jeopardy". They have living conditions that are worse than most people and they cannot get information to help them change those conditions.

If people cannot read they sometimes have trouble following health instructions. They cannot read safety warnings on pill bottles and may accidentally mix up medications or take too much medication, which hurts them. They may be missing out on good information about how to eat well and live in a healthy way. But even if people have good information, lack of money means they usually have a poor diet. They may be hungry most of the time. Someone who is hungry has a harder time focusing on a task and learning.

F. Friendship and community

People who have not had the chance to become literate feel cut off from other people in their community. It is harder to join clubs or go to restaurants or join in community activities.

Many people who are concerned about the lives of people with disabilities have found that many people with disabilities don't have friends.

Being set apart from the rest of the community is a big barrier to making friends because it means those people do not have many chances to meet other people. Services and support workers can stop people from making friends if the rules they make keep people apart from others and alone. Attitudes are another barrier. Many people cannot imagine why anyone would even be interested in having close friendships with people with disabilities.

G. Violence and abuse

People with disabilities are vulnerable to many kinds of violence and abuse. They are discriminated against in many ways every day. They often find themselves in situations where others have power over them. People around them may not notice the violence or abuse that happens to them.

Violent and abusive acts that happen to people with disabilities may be just one or many of these:

- ❑ Physical force (hitting or slapping)
- ❑ Physical actions that take the form of care (giving medications, using restraints)
- ❑ Unwanted physical actions that are sexual (unwanted sexual intercourse or fondling)
- ❑ Denial of a person's rights, necessities, privileges or opportunities by a care-giver
- ❑ Threatening or hurtful remarks
- ❑ A lack of proper action (not doing anything about abuse).

(From* Harm's Way: The Many Faces of Violence and Abuse against Persons with Disabilities, *The Roeher Institute, 1995.)

What you need to listen for:

People who run inclusive literacy programs know how important it is for people to learn literacy skills. They know that people may have many painful realities in their lives. They know that literacy education can give people skills to better deal with these issues. As more people move from institutions and segregated settings to the community, they have much more need for literacy skills so they can manage their lives well.

Literacy helps people avoid poverty and poor health.
Literacy leads to chances to get real jobs.
Literacy makes it easier to join in community life.
Literacy improves the chances of getting fair treatment.

Question 6:
Is your program inclusive?

The issue:

Inclusive literacy programs have instructors and tutors who know without a doubt that everyone can learn. People who teach will show confidence that they can build literacy skills. They will see the barriers that stop people from getting ahead.

They will know how much courage it took for the person to come to the literacy program and they will create a safe, friendly feeling. Learners will be supported to make choices based on their interests and learning goals. Learners' life experiences will be the learning tools.

Sometimes negative attitudes stop people from being able to take part in literacy programs:

- ❑ the belief that learners with an intellectual disability cannot learn or develop literacy skills;
- ❑ the idea that they will not keep up with what is being taught;
- ❑ the belief that it is the individual's fault that they can't learn, not the fault of the policy of the program failing to meet the needs of the individual;
- ❑ the belief that most adults with disabilities will not learn beyond a Grade 3 or 4 level;
- ❑ the idea that even if individuals do make progress this will not make any difference in their lives;
- ❑ the belief that a learner with disabilities makes the literacy program look bad.

These attitudes have to be changed because they are preventing some people from getting their fair chance to enter a literacy program.

What you need to listen for:

A program that is truly inclusive will not have those negative beliefs. The program will help people to take part by having positive attitudes:

- ❑ the belief in people and their abilities to learn;
- ❑ the desire to get to know the person first and build their self-confidence;
- ❑ the belief that a goal can be set and small steps can be taken to reach the goal.

Question 7:
Who funds this program?

The issue:

In Canada, each province is in charge of its own education. Each province decides how much money is spent to teach adults to read and write. It provides that money for adults to learn literacy skills in its schools. There are also many organizations not run in schools by the government that teach people to read, write and work with numbers. Sometimes the government pays to help run these organizations.

There are many places that offer literacy programs:

- ❑ community centres
- ❑ libraries
- ❑ school boards
- ❑ community colleges
- ❑ vocational schools and many places where people work.

What you need to listen for:

In Canada, people are being taught in inclusive literacy programs in many different ways in their communities. Although barriers still exist, there is proof that it is possible to include people in a number of different settings.

Question 8:
Are there enough literacy programs for everyone who wants to attend one?

The issue:

There is not enough funding of literacy education in Canada. This means that there are waiting lists, not enough staff and not enough supports to help them do their job well. Not enough funding makes it even harder for learners who need lots of support to get a place in a class.

As yet, there are no policies to make sure everyone can be included in literacy classes. So there is a danger of people being unfairly left out of classes.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive programs advocate for people to be included in regular classes in community literacy programs. They speak up about the successes people have had. They offer training for other tutors. They make sure that when literacy policy is being made the needs of people with intellectual disabilities are included. They reach out and help other groups set up literacy programs.

Question 9:
Is your program free or are there costs?

The issue:

Some literacy programs are free but others have a fee. These costs can stop people from joining literacy programs. The cost of programs and the costs of getting to the program are barriers because people with intellectual disabilities are so short of money. For some people, there are also the costs of attendant care or other personal supports. All this may make learners feel it is too hard to go to literacy classes.

In some provinces, adults getting social assistance are not allowed to take literacy classes while they are getting assistance. Some people who get unemployment insurance run into problems keeping their benefits when they start a full-time literacy program.

What you need to listen for:

It is important to know how much it will cost to learn.

- ❑ Is there a program fee? If yes, how much is it?
- ❑ Will there be other expenses, such as transportation?
- ❑ Will joining a literacy program mean losing some of your social assistance or unemployment benefits?

You may need to find someone who can help to answer these questions and solve any problems that may arise.

Question 10:
What supports and services do you provide?

The issue:

In order for people to attend programs they may need certain supports and services. Programs need to be free of physical barriers. They may have to offer classes in the day and the evening. People who teach literacy will need to understand that learners may have many tough issues in their lives and the tutors will have to be willing to offer advice, support and friendship. Some learners may need child care or counselling. Others may need computers to help them speak or hear.

Some people may need attendant care and personal support so they can take literacy classes. They may need these personal supports when they eat or want to use the washroom or for turning the pages of a book.

One problem is that even when there is government money for attendant care, taking literacy programs is not seen as something the government wants to give people money to do. Or the time of day or week a person can get an attendant is not when the literacy program is running.

Adults who need transportation to get to the program have problems, too. Special buses and vans for people with disabilities have to be booked way ahead of time.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive programs know that they must provide supports so their literacy classes can include everyone.

- ❑ Is there a ramp, for example?
- ❑ Is child care available?
- ❑ Are there counsellors?
- ❑ Is the program offered in the day-time and the evening, for flexibility?
- ❑ Are there people to provide personal supports at mealtime, for example?

Sometimes the supports can come from the literacy program itself. In other cases, they can come from others in the person's life, from families, friends and support workers.

Question 11:
What sorts of things could I learn to read?

The issue:

Learners need materials that are written in plain, straightforward language. These materials need to provide a lot of information. This information might be about how to use the health care system. It might be about how to apply for benefits. It might be about how to appeal decisions of government officials on allowances and social assistance. It might be about rights and responsibilities. It might be about how to use the legal aid system.

In addition, learners need materials that talk about the experiences of adults living with an intellectual disability. A big challenge for adults beginning to read is being able to find meaning in what they read. Some literacy programs help adult learners begin their literacy education with their own stories. Some programs also provide ways of publishing the work of learners.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs will be able to show examples of books and other materials that are in clear, straightforward words and design. They will also have books of learners' stories and experiences. You might ask whether the program has books about living in an institution or working at a workshop.

Question 12:
Are my individual needs going to be met?

The issue:

Some ways of teaching do not work because they do not suit the student. Students need to be in control of their learning. Often in the past they learned to depend on others. Each person must want to learn for their own reasons, not for other people's reasons. They should choose what they want to learn and why. It is important that the learner helps choose books and materials. Even though the learners are only beginning to read, these books should not be childish because the learners are adults.

Many learners prefer to work one-to-one with a tutor at first because they feel a little shy. However, tutors may feel there are some good points to learning in a group. The discussions are lively and often students want to teach one another.

Successful programs see the unique needs of each learner.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs will ask new learners what they want to learn and then come up with a plan to help them reach those goals. The learning is based on the goals of the student. Each student will be able to choose methods and materials.

If you know what you want to learn, this would be a good time to say what your goal is and to see whether the program will be able to help you reach your goal.

Question 13:
Can you give me a list of things I would do in my class?

The issue:

There are many methods used in teaching reading, writing and numeracy to help people reach their goals. No single method always works. Whatever works for an individual learner becomes a good teaching method. Here are a few ideas that have been used successfully.

A. Language experience writing

Students tell their ideas to their tutors and then learn to read these stories, first with help and then alone. Tutors may need to help learners get their ideas out. Sometimes the first sentence has only two or three words. Ideas come more quickly when the learner begins to see that their stories are worth writing.

B. Stories and other reading material on topics the learner knows about

Stories about living in an institution or working in a sheltered workshop let others know what these kinds of lives were like. Stories also give other learners reading material they can understand.

C. Computer-assisted literacy

The computer is good for learning because it lets people repeat things over and over. A tutor is still needed to give encouragement and support. It is important that people know how to use the skills they learn on the computer in their daily life. This can lead to improvements in reading and communication skills as well as self-confidence.

D. Using material that fits with the learner's goals

These might include recipes, bus timetables, menus, charts or graphs from a job or from home. When learners bring materials to the class from home, it helps them get involved in the learning process.

E. Assisted or paired reading from accessible books and taped books

Sharing the reading by taking turns or by reading in pairs at the same time are good methods for learners. Some of the most useful books may have only two or four sentences on each page. Some will also have a picture to give the learner a clear idea of what the story is about. A tutor or another member of the group may help students teach one another.

F. Doing things outside the classroom to get discussion going

Going for a walk or doing something outside the classroom may be an easier way of starting a conversation. Talking about life experiences may be hard for some people.

G. Collecting people's stories and putting them in a binder

Other learner's stories can be useful reading materials. These stories can be kept in a binder and arranged by reading level. Other learners in the program can read them.

H. Group work

Learners working in groups can use the blackboard to write a letter together about a situation or issue that concerns them all.

I. Making collages out of magazines

Cutting out articles or pictures from magazines is a good way of bringing up topics to talk about and finding out the person's interests.

J. Having a lot of different materials to work with

Having a lot of materials gives different ways to help the learner understand and remember. Programs that have a lot of different materials have many ways to interest learners. It is easier to learn if the examples are interesting and easy to understand. If the examples are about things not familiar to students, they will lose interest.

What you need to listen for:

If one of these suggestions is not clear, ask for more information. If one of them sounds interesting, speak up about it. You now have some ideas about what you might like to do if you decide to join the program.

Question 14:
Do you work in partnership with other programs?

The issue:

Partnerships among literacy programs and other education, training, employment and recreational places are very important. Learners need support when they want to take part in work or other learning opportunities. People who teach can help the person find educational, training and recreational programs that match their interests.

Partnerships also means reaching out to people in the community and in institutions who might like to have literacy skills. It means advocating for access to all literacy programs so that people with disabilities have choices about where they go.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive programs have information on other services to assist students. They also link students to other people who can help in the community such as people at multicultural agencies, work training, jobs or with unemployment insurance.

Question 15:
Do you encourage friends, families and supporters of the learner to be involved?

The issue:

Partnerships with people in other parts of an adult's life are important for adult learners. When the person agrees, it can be helpful to them if their support workers, family members, friends or co-workers can be involved. These people can help with learning at home, at work or elsewhere. They can use some of the methods that work in the literacy program to create other chances to learn in daily life.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive programs encourage other people in the learner's life to be involved. They know the importance of a support network and welcome others to help the person learn.

Question 16:
How will I be evaluated?

The issue:

Inclusive programs welcome any student who wants in the program. The only rule is that they want help with their reading and writing. People who teach may want to know a person's reading level. They want this information to match the learner with a suitable tutor, not to keep people out. As a way to get this information, a tutor might talk to the person and listen to their history. The tutor would not do a formal assessment, knowing it can be frightening.

Tutors look for signs of success in a person's life outside the classroom. When students take more responsibility for their own learning that is also considered a sign of success.

What you need to listen for:

People who teach in inclusive literacy programs know that tests can scare learners. They need to be flexible about how they will evaluate someone.

Question 17:
What are your tutors like?

The issue:

Literacy programs that are successful at including people need tutors who are supportive. Tutors have to respect the learners. They need good listening skills. They need to be eager and have a good sense of humour. They need to have a positive attitude and confidence about the learners' skills. They will value the deeper understanding they will get when people talk to them about the realities of their lives. They will want the tutor and learner to be equal.

Tutors understand how important it is to create a safe place to learn. They know that most learners have had a bad time in school. They know the importance of building people's self-confidence.

What you need to listen for:

Good tutors are sure that everyone can build literacy skills. They are good at working with people. They see the obstacles people with disabilities have to overcome just to get to the literacy program. They can draw out and use the learner's life experiences as learning tools.

Question 18:
What kind of tutor training do you give?

The issue:

Tutor training is key to creating inclusive programs. It is a chance for the program to build enthusiasm for inclusion. Everyone in the program should support inclusion, not just one or two individuals. Training is also a time for people who teach to share teaching methods and ideas. People may also want to talk about how to best support certain students, and how to know when tutors and learners are being successful.

Some of the best training is done by the learners themselves just by talking about their experiences and answering questions. It is also a chance for learners to read some of their writings.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs provide training to new tutors in which they learn to be sensitive about the issues facing people with disabilities. The tutors can hear about these issues from students. Learners' stories about their emotions and their struggle are read out loud. Often there is time for questions and answers where tutors learn about students' experiences as a result of having been labelled.

Question 19:

Do you keep information confidential? Will you check with me about what information you share?

The issue:

Some tutors prefer to have information about the learner with whom they will be working. They like to have this information before they start working with the person. Others prefer not to have information ahead of time. They do not want to form an idea about the person before they meet. They want to get to know the learner over time. Most people who run programs and teach agree that adult learners themselves should be the ones who decide whether they wish to share information about themselves and with whom they wish to share it.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs have a policy that says students need to be asked first whether they want to share personal information at all. If they do agree to share, the student can say who they want to share it with before any information is given to anyone.

Question 20:
What happens if the learner-tutor pair does not work out?

The issue:

Good programs need strong leaders who will deal with situations that don't work out. Good leadership means sometimes the person running the program has to get involved with situations. For example, when problems come up — a student arrives late or not at all, a tutor feels things are not going well in class, or a tutor-student match does not seem to be working out — the leader is willing to help. They might phone to see if the student is ill or call a meeting with the learner's support network. They might change the tutor-learner match or the timetable.

Even the best matching process cannot make sure that every tutor-learner team will work out. Learners and tutors should feel free to say when things are not working well.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs know that they must listen when students talk about the realities of their lives. They know they must listen to what students say about problems with a certain tutor and do something about it, such as arrange another match.

Question 21:
Can my support worker or family member or friend come to the literacy program with me?

The issue:

Some learners may need to go to a literacy programs with a care-giver (family member, friend or paid care-giver). The care-giver may need to provide help or physical care to the individual. He or she may also be able to support the literacy skills the learner is gaining in the program.

The learner needs to say what they would like their care-giver to do and if their care-giver needs to be in the class. Maybe the care-giver can be in another room during the class and come only when needed. It shows respect to other learners when you are aware that the care-giver in the class changes the learning environment for everyone. It is a good idea to discuss this with the group beforehand.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive programs will be flexible and will meet the needs of the individual student. They know that a person who needs secure and reliable support will need that support to take part in, and learn in, a literacy program.

Question 22:
Can I be on the board?

The issue:

The challenge for literacy education is to help people learn to read and write as a means of empowerment. Helping people gain these skills gives them a way to be a part of community life.

Inviting speakers to talk about important issues of the day helps people to learn. When they begin to see problems they may all share, they may find a way to act together.

When students hold meetings, reach out to other groups, write letters, invite speakers and take on important positions, they are using literacy skills that will make an important difference in their lives. It ensures that their voice is heard in their broader communities.

What you need to listen for:

Inclusive literacy programs will encourage a learner-centred approach to literacy. They will help learners gain the skills needed for personal empowerment and social change. One way of doing that is by giving learners a chance to take on important positions, such as sitting on the board of directors.

Helpful resources and organizations

Handbooks and guides

Butler, Shelley. **Learning about Literacy and Disability.** Toronto: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1990.

Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), Inc. **The Literacy Book: Options for teaching literacy to people with disabilities.** Toronto: CILT, 1991.

Dolman, Leslie and Debra Beattie-Kelly. **Making Your Literacy Program Accessible: A guide for practitioners.** Toronto: D.A.D.A. (Designing Aids for Disabled Adults), 1991.

Parkins, Sherri. **Accessibility and Beyond: Accessibility issues for Adult Basic Literacy Programs.** North York, Ontario: North York Board of Education, 1992.

The Roeher Institute. **Literacy in Motion: A guide to inclusive literacy education.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1994.

Rogers, Julia. **Am I Welcome Here? A book about literacy and psychiatric experiences.** Toronto: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1991.

Sanders, Maureen. **Meeting Challenges: A literacy project for adults with developmental disabilities.** Edmonton: Prospects Adult Literacy Association, 1991.

The Scottish Community Education Council. **Moving Ahead: A new handbook for tutors helping mentally handicapped adults to learn.** Edinburgh: Author, N.d.

Sutcliffe, Jeannie. **Teaching Basic Skills to Adults with Learning Difficulties.** London, England: The National Organisation for Adult Learning/The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1994.

Policy and research

Gaber-Katz, Elaine and Gladys M. Watson. **The Land that We Dream Of ... A participatory study of community-based literacy.** Toronto: Research in Education Series, OISE Press/The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991.

Jones, Stan. **Survey of Adult Literacy in Ontario.** Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, Ministry of Education, 1992.

Miller, Louise. **Illiteracy and Human Rights.** Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat, 1990.

The Roeher Institute. **Changing Canadian Schools: Perspectives on disability and inclusion.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1991.

The Roeher Institute. **Harm's Way: The many faces of violence and abuse against persons with disabilities.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1995.

The Roeher Institute. **Literacy and Labels: A look at literacy policy and people with a mental handicap.** Downsview, Ontario: Author, 1990.

The Roeher Institute. **On Target? Canada's employment-related programs for persons with disabilities.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1992.

T.V. Ontario. **Lifeline to Literacy: People with disabilities speak out.** Toronto: The Ontario Education Communications Authority, 1989.

White, Joyce. **Organizing Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Canada: A policy and practice discussion document.** Ottawa: The Movement for Canadian Literacy, N.d.

Resource guides

Avanti Resources Guide (1993-94) is an annual listing of over 1000 different titles available for adult basic education workers and students. Resources are selected from commercial and non-commercial sources and include adult readers, tutor training packs, reference books, student workbooks, cassettes and computer software. Available from:

Avanti Books
8 Parsons Green
Boulton Road
Stevenage, Herts
England, SG1 4QG
Tel. (0438) 350155

Guidelines and Support Materials for the Acquisition of Computer-based Adult Literacy Systems (1994), produced by the National Literacy Secretariat, addresses many issues to be considered when in buying a computer-based adult literacy system. An annotated bibliography and an overview chart of available systems are included. Available from:

National Literacy Secretariat
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Tel. (819) 953-5280
Fax. (819) 953-8076

Literacy Materials Bulletin, produced by various programs in B.C., is a useful periodical that reviews literacy materials from large and small group publishers. In addition to bibliographic information, a sample page of the item reviewed is included. Available from:

Adult Literacy Contact Centre
Suite 622
510 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1L8
Tel. (604) 684-0624
Fax. (604) 684-8520

Suggested Resources for Literacy Programs (2nd ed. 1994), Literacy and Continuing Education Branch of Manitoba Education and Training, is an excellent guide for those who want to start up a literacy collection. It is divided into examples of collections of various sizes and the costs involved in setting them up.

Resource Reading List (1990) is an annotated bibliography of resources by and about Native people produced by the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with the Native Peoples. It is divided into four sections: (1) Books for Children and Elementary Schools; (2) Teaching Resources; (3) Books for Youth and Adults; (4) Back of the Book (periodicals, publishers and indexes). Available from:

Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples
P.O. Box 574, Stn. P.
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2T1
Tel. (416) 588-2712

The Learning Centre: Adult basic education using computers (1992) reports on the establishment of a literacy centre that incorporates the use of computers and other technologies. It is published by the Ottawa Board of Education and includes two volumes. Available from:

Ottawa Board of Education
330 Gilmour Street
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0P9

Good Materials and Where to Find Them — An Adult Literacy Resource Guide (1987). In addition to information on assessing adult literacy materials, this guide provides a publisher's list, reviews and notes on ordering overseas materials. Available from:

Metropolitan Toronto Movement for Literacy
9 St. Joseph Street, Suite 302
Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 1J6
Tel. (416) 961-4013

Program-based literacy materials catalogue: A project of the Ontario Regional Literacy Desktop Publishers (1994). Items in this catalogue are grouped by publisher. They include learner-written materials, tutor-practitioner tools and materials designed for interest reading. Two pages are devoted to each item: author, description of the item, level, date published and distributor are featured on the first page, while the second page contains an illustration from the item itself. Available from:

Program Based Materials Project
Southwestern Literacy Clearinghouse
600 Oakdale Ave.
Sarnia, Ontario N7V 2A9
Tel. (519) 332-6855

Telling Our Stories Our Way (1990) is a Canadian guide to materials for women learning to read. Items reviewed include stories, personal accounts, biographies, poetry and information books on health. Available from:

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women
47 Main Street
Toronto, Ontario M4E 2V6
Tel. (416) 699-1909

Booknotes: Recommended reading for Adult Literacy Students (1990) is a collection of short, informative reviews intended to serve as a catalogue for those aiming to present good literature to adult students of literacy. Available from:

"Booknotes"
Adult Literacy Unit
Adelaide College of TAFE
Light Square, Adelaide 5000
Australia

Read Easy (1990) is a book of reading resources for adults with an intellectual disability. It is divided into three sections: print materials, audio-visual materials and tutor materials. Available from:

J. Whitaker and Sons Ltd.
12 Dyott Street
London WC1A 1DF
England

This list of resource guides was provided by

ALPHA Ontario

(The Literacy and Language Training Resource Centre)
21 Park Road
Toronto, Ontario M4W 2N1
Tel. (416) 397-5900
1-800-363-0007
Fax: (416) 397-5915
TDD: (416) 397-5901

Plain language and learner writing

There is a growing body of plain language and learner-writing material available. For more complete listings consult the resource guides above. The following is a sampling of available material:

Carneiro, Isaura. **Where There Is a Will There Is a Way.** Toronto: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program Publications, 1994.

Collie, Robert. **Getting Along.** Toronto: East End Literacy Press, 1985.

Doiron, Rose. **My Name is Rose.** Toronto: East End Literacy Press, 1987.

Jeffery, Sherrill. **Rings, Watches, and Me: My day in a jewellery store.** Edmonton: Prospects Literacy Association, 1994.

North York Board of Education. **Pat's Poems.** North York, Ontario: Author, N.d.

The Read-Write Centre, Kingston Literacy. **I Live My Own Life Now.** Kingston: Author, N.d.

The Read-Write Centre, Kingston Literacy. **If We Had Only Known.** Kingston: Author, N.d.

The Read-Write Centre, Kingston Literacy. **Merry-Go-Rides.** Kingston: Author, 1991.

The Roeher Institute. **The Right to Control What Happens to Your Body.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1991.

The Roeher Institute. **The Right to Fair and Equal Treatment.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1991.

The Roeher Institute. **The Right to Have Enough Money.** Downsview, Ontario: Author, 1990.

The Roeher Institute. **The Right to Have a Job.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1994.

The Roeher Institute. **The Right to Read and Write.** North York, Ontario: Author, 1991.

Symons, Louise. **Meeting Anne Murray.** Edmonton: Prospects Literacy Association, 1994.

Movement for Canadian Literacy

Provincial and Territorial Literacy Coalitions and Contacts

Movement for Canadian Literacy National Organization
458 MacLaren St.
Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 5K6
Phone: (613) 563-2464
Fax: (613) 563-2504
Executive Director: Nancy Jennings

Yukon Learn
308-A Hanson Street
Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 1Y6
Phone: (403) 668-6280
Fax: (403) 633-4576
Coordinator: Valerie Baggaley

NWT Literacy Council
Box 761
Yellowknife, NWT, X1A 2N6
Phone: (403) 873-9262
Fax: (403) 873-0423
Executive Director: Barbara Paquin

Literacy B.C.
Suite 1122-510 West Hastings St.
Vancouver, B.C., V6B 1L8
Phone: (604) 687-5077
Fax: (604) 687-5076
Executive Director: Linda Mitchell

Alberta Association for Adult Literacy

c/o AVC 332 6 Ave. SE
Att'n: #211 RMP
Calgary, Alberta, T2G 4S6
Phone: (403) 297-4994
Fax: (403) 297-4849
Office Coordinator: Belle Auld

Saskatchewan Literacy Network

P.O. Box 1520
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 3R5
Phone: (306) 653-7368
Fax: (306) 933-6490
Executive Director: Nayda Veeman

L.W.A.M. (Literacy Workers Alliance of Manitoba)

107 Pulford Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 1X8
Phone/Fax: (204) 452-3139
Coordinator: Suzanne Henry

Ontario Literacy Coalition

365 Bloor Street E., Ste. 1003
Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4
Phone: (416) 963-5787
Fax: (416) 961-8138
Executive Director: Susan Sussman

L.P.Q. (Literacy Partners of Quebec)

3040 Sherbrooke St. West, Rm. 4B-1
Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4
Phone: (514) 931-8731, ext. 1413
Fax: (514) 931-5181
Coordinator: Judy Brandeis

Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition

No staff, no office; Board contact: Barbara Moreton
P.O. Box 112
Heatherton, Nova Scotia, B0H 1R0
Phone: (902) 625-3761
Fax: (902) 386-2316

P.E.I. Literacy Alliance

P.O. Box 400
Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 7K7
Phone: (902) 368-3620
Fax: (902) 628-8178
Executive Director: Dianne Morrow

New Brunswick Committee on Literacy

900 Hanwell Road
Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3B 6A2
Phone: (506) 457-1227
Fax: (506) 459-0007
Promotions Coordinator: Jan Greer

Newfoundland Literacy Development Council

238 Blackmarsh Rd.
St. John's, Newfoundland, A1E 1T2
Phone: (709) 738-7323
Executive Director: Wayne Taylor

Additional resources

Canadian Association for Community Living

Kinsmen Building
York University
4700 Keele St.
North York, Ontario
M3J 1P3
Tel: (416) 661-9611
Fax: (416) 661-5701
TDD: (416) 661-2023

People First of Canada

489 College St.
Suite 308
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1A5
Tel: (416) 920-9530
Fax: (416) 920-9503

Selected Publications of The Roeher Institute

The Right to Have a Job: A Straightforward Guide to Canada's Employment-Related Programs for Persons with Disabilities
1994 · 24 pages · $7
Order no. 1-895070-38-4

The Right to Fair and Equal Treatment: A Straightforward Guide to the Canadian Human Rights Act
1991 · 26 pages · $7
Order no. 0-920121-99-3

The Right to Control What Happens to your Body: A Straightforward Guide to Issues of Sexuality and Sexual Abuse
1991 · 28 pages · $7
Order no. 1-895070-01-5

The Right to Have Enough Money: A Straightforward Guide to the Disability Income System in Canada
1990 · 32 pages · $7
Order no. 0-920121-94-2

The Right to Read and Write: A Straightforward Guide to Literacy and People with a Mental Handicap in Canada
1990 · 27 pages · $7
Order no. 0-920121-93-4

Literacy in Motion: A Guide to Inclusive Literacy Education
1993 · 31 pages · $18
Order no. 1-895070-36-8

Harm's Way: The Many Faces of Violence and Abuse against Persons with Disabilities
1995 · 262 pages · $28
Order no. 1-895070-56-2

Just Technology? From Principles to Practice in Bio-Ethical Issues
An Issue Paper from the International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap
1994 · 180 pages · $24
Order no. 1-895070-51-1

Changing Canadian Schools: Perspectives on Disability and Inclusion
1991 · 331 pages · $24
Order no. 1-895070-00-7

Literacy and Labels: A Look at Literacy Policy and People with Mental Handicaps
1989 · 118 pages · $16 · Order no. 0-920121-46-2

entourage: The quarterly journal on community living.

For information on ordering contact:
The Roeher Institute Publications
Kinsmen Building, York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3
Telephone: (416) 661-9611
Fax: (416) 661-5701
TDD: (416) 661-2023.